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THE LITERATURE OF THE JEWS IN YEMEN.

THE existence of Jews in Yemen, although mentioned by messengers from Jerusalem (שליחין), who went there from time to time to solicit contributions for their poor brethren in the Holy Land in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, first came into prominent notice through the late Jacob Sappir and the famous traveller and distinguished Orientalist, M. Joseph Halévy. Both not only gave an account of them, but brought MSS. thence, which enable us to give a summary abstract of their literary productions. Later on these two explorers were followed by commercial travellers, who brought more MSS. from Yemen, and thus added more information about our subject. But before proceeding to speak of the literature produced by the Yemen Jews, it will be necessary to discuss their early settlement in South Arabia. According to the tradition of the Jews in San'a, as reported by J. Sappir,¹ Jews came there forty-two years before the destruction of the first Temple. When they heard Jeremiah's prophecy (xxi. 9): "He that goes out [of this city] he shall live," 75,000 warriors of the nobles of Judah, with priests, Levites, and slaves, headed by twenty-five chiefs of families (whose names the Jews of San'a still preserve), left Jerusalem, passed the Jordan, travelled through the wilderness, and by the way of Edom, after eleven days' journey, finally reached Yemen, which is a fruitful land, like "the garden of God and the land of Israel" (San'a is, indeed, still called the garden of Eden). They took possession of it, choosing a king, who built the

¹ *Eben Sappir*, i., p. 99.

Fortress Nakus, and established a powerful kingdom. When Ezra sent letters to them, asking them to return to Palestine, together with the exiles of Babel, they did not listen to him, and continued obdurate, even when he made his personal appearance amongst them. They said that the time of the true redemption had not yet arrived. Why, then, go again to meet a second exile, which must inevitably come? Ezra grew angry, and excommunicated them; to which they retorted by a curse, to the effect that he would not be buried in the Holy Land. And both curses were confirmed. The Jews in Yemen have found no rest or repose up to the present day, and Ezra is buried in the desert of Bassora. The Jews of Yemen hated Ezra so much that his name is never given to a child, whilst the names of Zechariah (Yahya in Arabic), Saadyah, Obadiah, Joseph, Aaron, Moses, David, Solomon, etc., are very frequent. These names they pretend were borne by the chiefs who led their people to Yemen. Up to the rise of Mohammed, they say, they were happy enough, and were undisturbed in their occupations; but since he vanquished them, after severe battles, they have been oppressed up to the present day, while a great number of Jews, according to their statements, were forced to accept the Islâm.

Whether this tradition be fact or legend, certain it is that centuries before Mohammed, there were powerful Jewish communities in North Arabia as well as in South Arabia or Yemen. Whether they came there as early as they assert, or effected a settlement during the last years of the second Temple, or even after its destruction, must remain an open question; there are no documents which can assist us to decide the question. Josephus does not mention Yemen at all, although he speaks of the Arabians on the border of the Jewish Kingdom. In the Mishnah, Arabian women are mentioned, and in the Talmud, Arabic expressions are given; but these refer most probably to the inhabitants of Northern Arabia, where we find before Mohammed's time powerful warriors and distinguished poets, who wrote in

Arabic.¹ As to Yemen, we know that Jews played an important rôle there from the fourth to the sixth century A.D., and allied themselves with the natives (Homerites or Himyars), in opposing the Byzantine rulers. It is even reported that kings of the Himyars were converted to Judaism, and that one of them massacred the Christians who came to establish themselves in Yemen. But according to recent investigations, the power of the Jews in Yemen seems to have been exaggerated by Christian writers of that epoch, for it is evident that their letters and reports on the subject are partial as concerning the ill-treatment of the Christians by the Jews.² However, we cannot decide this question here; the fact that Jews occupied a position of influence in Yemen is sufficient for our present purpose.

There is a blank as to any mention of the Jews in Yemen between the sixth century (after the defeat of the king Dhoo Nowâs), and the letter addressed by Maimonides at about the year 1160 to the chief of the congregation of Yemen, R. Jacob ben Nethaneel ibn al-Fayumi, or of Fayum, in Egypt, of which we shall have to say more later on.³ Though we are certain of the presence of Jews in Arabia, north and south, we know little about their learning in Jewish matters. There can be no doubt that the Jews in North Arabia brought their Bible with them, and possessed a good stock of Aggadic matter, upon which Mohammed based his Koran.⁴ And it is not very hazardous

¹ See Dr. Hirschfeld's *Essai sur l'Histoire de Médine (Revue des Etudes Juives, T. vii., p. 167 sqq.)*

² See M. Duchesne's article and M. J. Halévy's rejoinder in the *Revue des Etudes Juives, T. xx., p. 220 sqq., and T. xxi., p. 73 sqq.*

³ In responsa of the Geonim, probably in the eleventh century, Yemen coins are mentioned. See Dr. Harkavy's edition of the *Responsen der Geonim*. Berlin: 1886, pp. 202 and 217.

⁴ See A. Geiger's essay: *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthum aufgenommen*; Bonn, 1833; Dr. J. Gastfreund's essay: *Mohammed nach Talmud und Midrasch*, Wien, 1875; Dr. H. Hirschfeld's *Jüdische Elemente im Korân*, Berlin, 1878; and *Beiträge zur Erklärung des Korans*, Leipzig, 1885.

to say that what the Jews in the north knew those in the south knew also. Moreover, it is more than probable that rabbinical emissaries came to Arabia and brought the legal and ritual decisions of the Talmudical schools. Such emissaries went to Egypt, Asia Minor, Africa, and Rome; why, therefore, should they not come to Arabia? But, granted this, there is no trace of any writings left by rabbis of Arabia, and therefore the view has lately been propounded that they were ignorant as to the interpretations of the Halakhot by the Rabbinical schools, and that the Yemen Jews possessed special ritual rules of their own.¹ But this reasoning could be applied also to the Jews in Persia, in Asia Minor, in Rome and Italy, Spain, France, and Germany. The Jews of the last-named countries were much farther from Babylonia than those of Yemen, and yet we have not heard that the rules for *Shehitah* and *Bediqah* were different with the Jews in Europe from those current among the Jews in Babylonia. It may be true that the early Jews of Yemen never saw a copy of the Talmud, but they would not have stood alone in this deficiency. This bulky compilation could not be procured everywhere, and many countries were unacquainted with it until the tenth century; but that does not prove that they did not possess a kind of abstract containing the daily ritual rules. If the Jews of Yemen produced no works on Talmudic topics, Persian Jews, who were the nearest to the seats of the Babylonian schools, are in the same condition. While rich men in Africa and Europe could finally procure copies of the Talmud, this was impossible for the Jews in Yemen, who were at the time when the Talmud was finished (eighth century) in utter misery. Surely from the epitaphs found at Aden, dating from the beginning of the eighth century, we may conclude that the Yemen Jews were as well acquainted with Rabbinical lore as all other Jews who were not in the

¹ See *Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. iii., p. 542.

immediate vicinity of the schools of Babylonia and Tunisia. We shall reproduce only one epitaph, which is of the earliest date.¹ It is the following: ברוך דיין האמת נאסף לבית עולמו האיש החכם . . . החסיד העניו המכובד והמאוסר הטוב והישר הירא שמים אדונינו שלום רי"ת בר הזקן הנכון החסיד העניו הירא שמים אדונינו חומר נ'גע בחדש תמוז שנת כ' לשמרות "Blessed be the judge of truth. Gathered to the house of his world is the man, the wise . . . the pious, the humble, the honoured and the happy, the good and the righteous, who feared heaven; our master, Shalom, the spirit of the Lord guided him (Isaiah lxiii. 14)—son of the venerable, the wise, the pious, the humble, who feared God, our master Hote, may he rest in Paradise, in the month of Tammuz, 20 of the era of the contracts" (*i.e.*, Seleucidæ). It is evident that the thousand is omitted, and that the full date is 1020 Sel., equal to 709 of the Christian era. Thus the epitaphs of Aden, (which is the key to San'a), of which we know a dozen, are written as early as the eighth century in the same Hebrew that we find used in the epitaphs of Italy of the same date, and do not present any admixture of strange words which Eldad is supposed to have brought from this part of the world.² These epitaphs, dated according to the era of the contracts, point to an acquaintance with the Babylonian schools, for the Italian early epitaphs date from the era of the destruction of the second Temple, and later on bear, in addition, the era of the creation.³ The Jews of Yemen continue up to the present day to date from the era of the contracts, using Aramaic formulæ, which point more to Babylonia than to Palestine. Moreover, the use of superlinear vowel-points (usually called Assyrian punctuation) in the pointed Hebrew texts written in Yemen would

¹ See J. Sappir, *Eben Sappir*, ii., p. 10, n. 1. See also *The* [London] *Palæographical Society* (Oriental section), plate xxix. (Hebrew).

² *Jewish Quarterly Review*, iii. p. 542.

³ See Professor G. T. Ascoli's essay: *Inscrizioni inedite o mal note, Greche, Latine, Ebraiche di antichi sepolcri giudaici del Napolitano (Atti del IV. Congresso, p. 239)*. Firenze, 1880.

argue their connection with the Eastern Massoretic schools rather than with the Palestinian one at Tiberias. We shall see later on that Saadyah Gaon's Arabic translations of Biblical books were very popular in the Yemen congregations. These translations reached them most probably from Egypt, since Yemen Rabbis seem to have come from that land. Jacob al-Fayyumi, who corresponded with Maimonides (about 1160), was a compatriot of Saadyah, who is also called al-Fayyumi, although born at Dilaz in Egypt.¹ The late J. Sappir thought that Jacob was even of the family of Saadyah Gaon, which may be the case, but there are no proofs for it.

According to Benjamin of Tudela (about 1175), there were Jews in Yemen, and learned men amongst them, but the passage in which the Yemen Jews are mentioned² is in a very corrupt state, and besides, Benjamin not having visited this country himself, it would be hazardous to draw any conclusion from the information he supplies. But it is evident from the introductory words of Maimonides to his letter, addressed to Jacob al-Fayyumi, that the congregations of Yemen were not devoid of learning. Maimonides addresses his letter to Jacob, and in general to all our eminent brethren, the wise of the congregations of Yemen (ולכלל כל אחינו ואלופינו כל תלמידי הקהלות בארץ הימן); and further on he speaks of "those who meditate all day in the law of Moses, and walk in the way which R. Ashi (the supposed compiler of the Bab. Talmud) taught" (וכל (היום הוגים בתורת משה • הולכים בדרך הורה רב אשי). Again, Maimonides says that these Yemen congregations observe the precepts not only strictly, but also with knowledge (מקיימים כל המצוות בדקדוקיהם ממקלותם), and he blesses God for the mercy he had upon the distant congregations, enabling them to observe the precepts (ברוך השם אשר לא

¹ See Dr. A. Harkavy, in the *Israelitische Monatsschrift*. Berlin, 1891; No. 2.

² Ed. Asher. translation, p. 113, sqq.

(השביית מקיימי ההוראה ושומרי הקים באיים הרחוקים.) And at the end of the letter Maimonides states "that he answers in Arabic, so that women and children should understand it, and be encouraged to stand firm by the Law," but he does not make any allusion to the weak state of learning in Yemen. Where is the proof, then, that in the eighth century they knew less about the Law than Jews in other countries? And as to the assertion that the Talmud did not reach Yemen, it seems to us a pure imagination, as we shall see further on. They themselves have a tradition, according to J. Sappir,¹ that before they received the compendium of Maimonides, they made their ritual decisions from the Talmud and other traditions. Only after Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* reached them, together with the letter to Jacob al-Fayyumi, they sent men to Egypt to find out the truth about Maimonides, and after a favourable report concerning his wisdom, learning and piety, they received him and his works as their guide. So far indeed does their veneration for him go that they include him in the *קדיש*, adding *רבנא משה בן מיימון*,² "and in the life of Moses ben Maimon." Their chief study now, Sappir adds, is the compendium of Maimonides, without taking notice of any other casuist; in general they do not care for hairsplitting discussions (*פלפול*); all they want is the final decision, which they find ready to hand in Maimonides' work. Later on they got hold of Joseph Caro's *Shulhan Aruch*, which they studied with the same object as they had studied Maimonides' code, viz., only for the final Halakhah. We possess numerous treatises of their schools, it is true, comparatively modern, on *Shehitah* and *Bediqah*,³ but there is no trace of strange words, as found in Eldad's Halakhas, and surely if they had been once in use with the Jews in Yemen, with whom we may

¹ *Eben Sappir*, i., p. 53.

² These words are not found in the MSS. of the Yemen Siddur.

³ See M. Halévy's account in the *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie*. Paris: 1873, p. 589.

safely count those of Aden, they would not have completely disappeared; the conservatism of the Jews would not allow of such a supposition.

We come now to the chief object of our paper, viz., the literary productions of the Jews in Yemen after Maïmonides' letter to Jacob al-Fayyumi.

Like the Spanish school in the tenth and the eleventh centuries, the Yemen Jews paid more attention to grammar, massorah, lexicography, exegesis, poetry and philosophy, than to casuistical discussions. The Franco-German schools, which remained in the background in these branches of studies, with few exceptions, produced, on the other hand, a huge *pilpulic* literature. Of course, all the schools east and west degenerated later on through the introduction of the Kabbalistic forgeries. Mysticism always possesses great power of attraction, and more especially in times of persecution and unhappiness.

BIBLE.—The largest number of the Yemen MSS. represent those which contain copies of the Pentateuch, with the Targum, and often with Saadyah Gaon's Arabic translation. None of these MSS., as far as they are known now, are older than the fourteenth century. For the Hebrew text the common vowel points are now employed, whilst in the Targum the superlinear system of punctuation is still in use. The Haftarothe are usually copied in a special volume; the Yemen rite does not differ much from the Ashkenazic, which came most likely from Babylonia. The five Megilloth are also copied in special volumes with an Arabic translation and an Arabic commentary, which is not by Saadyah. The one on Ecclesiastes has lately been recognised as that of Judah ibn Ghayath,¹ imported probably from Egypt. Rarer are the copies containing the Prophets and the Hagiographa with and without the Targum. The Bible is called with them *Tadj*, "crown" (כתר). The

¹ See Dr. Jacob Loewy's dissertation : *Libri Kohelet versio arabica quam composuit ibn Ghiyath*, Berlin, 1881.

Massorah, when put in the margin, is remarkably correct. The Pentateuch MSS. are sometimes preceded by a grammatical treatise originally written in Arabic with the title of *Tidjan*, which was afterwards translated with many additions into Hebrew. The latter was edited with copious notes by M. J. Derenbourg, of Paris, in the *Journal Asiatique*, 1870, under the supposed title of *Manuel de Lecteur* (הורית הקורא).¹ The Arabic text exists in several MSS., and is awaiting publication. This grammatical treatise, which is the only one known to be in the possession of the Yemen Jews, was believed by the late J. Sappir to be by Saadyah Gaon, but to judge from the context this cannot be the case. We have to mention a special compilation of a Massorah by Yahya Salih, edited by Dr. Ginsburg, with the fictitious title המסורה מתימן.²

It seems from J. Sappir's report that the Massorah is even now a special branch of study with the Yemen Jews, and more especially with the official readers. Their pronunciation of Hebrew is very minute and accurate according to the tonic accents. Possibly the Yemen Jews retain the old tradition of reciting Biblical passages, for it is different from that of the Spanish and German Jews. Moreover they have special tunes for the accents on the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa, and more especially for the three poetical books called *אמרת*, viz., Job, Proverbs, and Psalms, which, as it is known, have a special system of accentuation.³

COMMENTARIES.—Few commentaries were written by Yemen Jews in comparison with the large number produced by the Jews of other countries. We have already

¹ This is the title of the Hebrew translation of Judah ben Balam's grammatical treatise composed in Arabic. See Dr. W. Wickes' book, *A Treatise on the Accentuation of the Twenty-one so-called Prose Books of the Old Testament*. Oxford, 1887, p. xi.

² *The Massorah*, Vol. III., Supplement, 1885, fol. 53, sqq.

³ See Dr. W. Wickes' book: *A Treatise on the Accentuation of the Three so-called Poetical Books of the Old Testament*. Oxford, 1881.

mentioned that they studied the Bible chiefly with the aid of Saadyah's translation and commentary. It would seem from marginal notes in copies of Biblical MSS. coming from Yemen that they also possessed the commentary of Rashi, of D. Qamhi, of Moses ben Nahman, and of Isaac Armaah; whether in printed editions or in MS. cannot be said with certainty. Most likely they had them in both forms, for we saw in a dealer's hand a copy of the Rabbinical Bible, printed on vellum, brought from Yemen; on the other hand, in the list (privately printed) of the MSS. in possession of Mr. Ephraim Deinard, formerly of Odessa, now in New York, mention is made of a copy of Rashi on the Pentateuch with an epitome of the בעל הטורים by Jacob ben Asher on the margin (page 4). In the year 1339 Nathaniel ben Isaiah composed a commentary on the Pentateuch in Arabic, which contains more Midrash than exegesis, and a little later Saadyah ben David of Aden (al-Adeni) wrote another in Arabic, of which the portions dealing with Genesis and Exodus are still extant. Both commentaries are to be found amongst the MSS. in the Bodleian Library. We are not certain whether Abraham ben Solomon, author of an interesting and valuable compilation of a commentary on the Prophets, was of Yemen, but the MSS. of this compilation in the British Museum and the Bodleian Library were written in that country.

TALMUD.—We have already mentioned the supposition that there was no trace of a copy of the Talmud in Yemen. That may have been the case in earlier times, but amongst the Deinard MSS. we find MSS. of the Gemara 1, of ביצה; 2, of פסחים; 3, of מועד קטן; 4, of מגילה; 5, of זבחים; written on paper by David ben Meoded. Herr Deinard states that the Mishnah is not in the same order as in our printed text; the word פיסקא is sometimes given for משנה, which is also noticeable in MSS. coming from Egypt. On the margins are extracts from Maimonides' חבור (Mishneh Torah). On the margin of No. 4 a short commentary is

to be found, and glosses containing opinions of some Gaonim, viz., Natronoi, Aha and Haya, R. Ephraim, of a certain Judah ben Isaac, and also a gloss headed פירוש על פסאקי. In No. 5, on the margin, are glosses extracted from the *Arukh* of R. Nathan and from the *Siphra*. To judge from all these glosses, to which we shall have to add many others, one might perhaps conclude that Yemen was once well stocked with important works on all branches of learning, which were gradually destroyed when the country was pillaged by the Arabs. Perhaps some works will still be found through visits of travellers into the more interior parts of the country. We do not know what has become of Mr. Deinard's MSS. If not sold in America, one of our great libraries ought to endeavour to acquire them.

More common with the Yemen Jews are copies of the עין יעקב by Jacob Habib (containing the Agadic passages of the B. Talmud); of Maimonides' Arabic commentaries on the Mishnah, and his books of precepts, also in Arabic. On the margin of a MS. of the former work on the part מועד, we see glosses extracted from a work by אבן השרון, i.e., Abner bar Ner hash-Sharoni; it seems that Abner wrote a twofold commentary, a lesser and a larger one, to judge from the following words עיין בפירושה זוטא דלאבן השרון בשני הפירושין, "See in the lesser commentary by Ibn hash-Sharon." If we are not mistaken this MS. is now in the British Museum.

There exists an Arabic super-commentary on Maimonides' commentary on the Mishnah, by Saadyah ben David al-Adeni, composed in the years 1478 to 1483. He is also the author of Liturgical pieces and rules on Calendar (MS. in the Bodl. Library, 619 to 622 and 1632 a, b).

MIDRASHIM.—The father of this Saadyah is the compiler of the "Great Midrash" on the Pentateuch, which Mr. Schechter is preparing for publication. We know already by articles of Dr. Hoffmann of Berlin and Dr. Levi of Breslau, that David made great use of the unknown Mekhiltâ, by Simeon ben Yohai; from Mr. Schechter's

edition, however, we hope to learn more precise information on it, and perhaps of some unexpected discovery of other Midrashim. None of the MSS. known of this Midrash bear the name of the compiler, but his name is given in another Midrash composed after him, as mentioned below.¹ In a MS. of this Midrash on Genesis, in the possession of Mr. Deinard, we read the full name of the compiler, as follows: מורנו ורבנו נר מערבי דוד ב"ר עמרם אלעדני —ממדינת עדן Midrash of our Master and Rabbi the Light of the West, David, son of R. Amram al-Adeni." The MSS. of this Midrash, of which there are numerous copies, will be enumerated and described by Mr. Schechter. Another Midrash was composed in 1430 by the physician Zechariah (Yahya) ben Solomon, with the title of מדרש הרופץ. It consists chiefly of homilies on the Pentateuch, the Haftarothe, and the books of Esther and Lamentations, of an ethical and philosophical character, in accordance with the theories of Maimonides. From his quotations² we can also see that there were books in Yemen; the compiler mentions, besides Saadyah Gaon and Maimonides, also Ibn Djanâh (the dictionary?), the philosopher R. Hasdai (probably Hasdai Crescas), and the Khozari (of Judah hal-Levi). A third Midrashic compilation on the Pentateuch (mostly of a philosophical character based upon Maimonides) was composed in the year 1484 to 1493 by David al-Lawani, with the title of מדרש אלוניו אלמגני —"A short but sufficient Midrash." The compiler states that he had read of old authors the following: the Bereshith Rabba, the Mekhilothe (*sic*), the Sifrâ, the Sifrê, the Yelamdenu, and the Tanhuma; of later ones he mentions Rashi, the Leqah Tob of Tobiah ben Eliezar, and the Commentaries of Qamhi. Of the works of his contemporaries he used the Midrash compiled by the Seqili, who went from Syria to Aden³; that by David al-Adeni, of which we have

¹ See at the foot of this page.

² *Catalogue of Berlin*, by Dr. Steinschneider, p. 71 *sqq.*

³ See *Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. ii., p. 333.

previously spoken; and many others current in Yemen (enumerated in the Bodleian Catalogue, No. 2,493). Let us add that fragments of MSS. of the *Pirke di R. Eliezer* written in Yemen, reached some libraries.

CASUISTICS.—Besides commentaries on the Mishnah by Maimonides, the Yemen Rabbis also possessed a few copies of his *Mishneh Torah*, which they quote under the title of *חבור*, which is the usual title given in Eastern casuistical books. Treatises on *Shehitah* and *Bediqah*, or commentaries on them, are a favourite subject of the Yemen Jews. They are by Yahya Salih, Musa el-Hadhari, by Isaac ben Abraham וינא, David ben Solomon, Vital, Yahya, אלכריחי, by some anonymous writer; others will be found later on. Most of these treatises are in Arabic.

KABBALAH.—Besides glosses on commentaries and on the prayers, they possess the *Bahir*, the *Zohar* (with a Commentary on Leviticus in possession of Mr. Deinard), Kabbalistic pieces of Nachmanides, the writings of Isaac Loria, Hayyim Vital, Moses Zakkuth, and others. A MS. recently acquired by the British Museum (Or. 4,115), with the title of *להם שלמה*, contains a Kabbalistical treatise, consisting of thirteen chapters, by Solomon ben David Kohen, composed for his son. In the preface the author says that he had at his disposal the following works: *ס' הולעת יעקב וס' מנחם ריקאטאטי וס' שערי אורה ומערכת האלהות וס' סגולות וס' דרך אמונה וס' הכוונות ושרש ישי וס' הזוהר והתקונים וס' הרזים ושערי ג'ע ומדרש רות מהנעלם וס' ר' בחיי וס' יצירה וארזי הלבנון*.

SIDDUR (PRAYER BOOK).—Next to copies of the Pentateuch, the Yemen MSS. are richest in copies of the Prayer-book. Naturally, each synagogue, at least, would possess one or more copies of it. The ritual rules are in Arabic; the Hebrew text is provided with superlinear vowel-points; the commentaries are in Arabic and Hebrew; the latter are overfilled with Kabbalistical explanations and applications. The *Pirke Aboth* is provided with a rational Hebrew com-

mentary, the Lamentations with a kind of Midrash in the guise of a commentary. The *Megillath Antiochos* is usually given in Aramaic and Arabic. At the end there are the rules for the calendar, by which the date of each copy can be approximatively fixed. (We find, also, a separate treatise on calendar. See below, p. 620.) The Yemen liturgies approach closely to the Spanish rite, from which the Yemen Jews have borrowed nearly all the hymns—viz., those of Solomon ben Gebirol, of Abraham and Moses Ben Ezra, of Judah Halevi, and of a few other authors. Most of the elegies for the ninth of Ab are borrowed from the German rite. There is no trace in them of early Piyyutim before Saadyah Gaon, and not even of the liturgical poems by him or his contemporaries. This absence is difficult to explain, unless they possessed a separate hymn-book, as is the case with the Selihoth, and, as we shall show in another article, to have been the case with the Yotzroth in Egypt. We have already said that the Yemen rite nearly approaches the Spanish rite; but there are many original points, for instance, in the Hoshanoth and in some benedictions. We hope that some one will undertake a new edition of Zunz's *Ritus*, and enlarge it by aid of the discoveries of previously unknown rites. The copies of the Yemen Prayer-book, as far as it is known, are not older than the fifteenth century, when the Spanish rite was already spread throughout the East, including Egypt. It is, therefore, possible that the Yemen rite was influenced by the Egyptian, with which country Yemen had most intimate communication.

POETRY.—Special books of hymns, mixed with poetical pieces, in Hebrew and Arabic, with the Arabic metre, have reached European libraries. They contain hymns by the leading Spanish poets which we have mentioned above, and these are followed by the compositions of native poets, chiefly of Yahya al-Dhahri (Zechariah ben Saadyah) and the members of the family el-Shebzi. These comparatively modern hymnologists show considerable taste and talent, and their Arabic compositions may prove useful for the

knowledge of the Yemen dialect. We do not know any MS. containing only profane poetry. One exception is made by the above-mentioned Zechariah ben Saadyah, who imitated al-Harizi, and composed, in 1573, forty-five maqamahs, with the title ס' המוסר ("book of morals"). The dialogue is here carried on between Mordecai of Sidon and Abner of Teman. Our poet depicts with vivid colours the calamities which so often befell the Jews of Yemen. This probably caused the destruction of many old books. Harizi's maqamahs seem to have been current in Yemen, as can be seen from the MS. copy of the תהכמוני (Bodl. Library, No. 25, 17), which was written in Yemen. Harizi dedicated it in this MS. to Shemariah ben David, who had the title of Naghid.

LEXICOGRAPHY.—We have said that R. Jonah ibn Djannâh is quoted in Yemen MSS., but none of his writings have as yet been found in Yemen. On the other hand, copies of R. Thanhum of Jerusalem's Arabic Dictionary to the Mishnah exist in the Bodleian Library, and one in that of Baron David de Günzburg at St. Petersburg. Here also the marginal glosses show the existence in Yemen of many works which are now lost.

PHILOSOPHY.—Maimonides' philosophical treatise, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, was much read in the original Arabic in Yemen; this is, perhaps, the only philosophical work which reached Yemen, to judge from the MSS. which J. Sappir saw among the Jews there. From fragments found in bindings we see that they copied in Hebrew characters Averroes' Arabic commentaries on Aristotle, as well as some mathematical and astronomical treatises of Arabic authors. But for this branch of learning, cultivated by the Jews of Yemen, a newly acquired MS. by the British Museum, Or. 4,104, gives much information, and, moreover, it mentions distinctly Samuel ben Jacob as the author of the Halakhot on *Shehitah* and *Bediqah*.¹

¹ See *Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. iii., p. 543.

The following are the contents of the MS. Or. 4,104, as far as we could make them out from a rather hasty inspection, prior to its acquisition by the authorities of the British Museum¹:—

It begins (1) with a treatise in Arabic on Shehitah, divided into twelve chapters; the Babylonian Talmud is quoted with the words נמר ר' אשי; at the end of the eighth chapter the name of Hananiah, son of Joshua, is quoted as a commentator of a part of the treatise. (2.) A similar treatise, opening with a poem, wherein the names of Saadyah ben Y'abets and Saadyah ben Mas'ud are praised, and in the last line Saadyah ben Zechariah names himself as the compiler of the book, written at Aden in the year 1619 Sel., equal to 1308 A.D. It is arranged in the form of question and answer, and the introduction is written in Hebrew and in rhymed prose, by Ibn al-Hawas (אלחואס). He made use, besides of the Talmud, of the works of Maimonides and the Geonim Yehudai and Saadyah, also of Samuel ben Jacob, of a commentary of Abraham Maimonides, and of the Geonim in Yemen (ומאורי אנשי תימן) viz., Yahyah ben Saad, Yahyah ben Shalom, Saadyah ben Mas'ud and Saadyah ben Ya'abets hab-Babli. In the course of an Arabic introduction, the compiler mentions the full title of Samuel ben Jacob's treatise and an unknown treatise by Saadyah Gaon, saying, וראלך מן צאבך אלרסאלה אעני רסאלה אלברחאן ורדכייה אלחיואן למר שמואל בן יעקב ז'צ'ל ומן כללם רבינו סעדיה אלפיומי פי כתאב אלמניאה אלדי לה עלי אחכאם אלריה. 'This treatise, which consists of nine chapters, is followed by the answers of Yahyah ben Saadyah. The compiler also quotes the following passage of Saadyah Gaon's commentary on Leviticus, saying, נתפרש עוד בפירוש רבי' סעדיה ופי רסאלה אלברחאן אן אלנסר אין בו סימן כלל. (3.) A similar treatise by Hana-

¹ On examination of British Museum MS., Or. 4,104, we find that Sections 1-6 have been probably detached by the vendor of the MS., so that the portion that reached the Museum begins with the item here numbered (6).

niah ben Joshuah, consisting of fifteen chapters, in which also Saadyah, Samuel, and Haya Gaon are quoted. (4.) Another similar treatise in Arabic by Hasin el-Dhamari (אלצמארי), consisting of eleven chapters. (5.) Another anonymous treatise, the text of which is in Hebrew, and the commentary in Arabic, has the following superscription: בשם יי אל עולם אתחיל לכתוב ענינים אחרים: מענייני הלכות שחיטה ממה שהשתדל בחיבורם ר' אשי ז"קל. It contains large extracts from the treatise of R. Samuel, and also from Saadyah's above-mentioned treatise. (6.) A treatise on the calendar by Joseph hal-Levi ben R. Japhet hal-Levi, disciple of R. Solomon ben R. Benayah, with the title of נר ישראל, "Lamp of Israel," composed in the year 1731 Sel., or 5180 A.M., equal to 1420 A.D. It is divided into fourteen chapters and is written in Arabic, but is followed by a partial translation into Hebrew. (7.) Another Arabic treatise follows, perhaps by the same author, on Geometry, with the title of כראב אלמסאחה, "Book of Measuring"; at the end is an Arabic poem of astronomical contents, with the following superscription: קאל אלפקיר אלי עפו אללה: תעלא חמזה בן סעיד אלהראזי אלערבי by Hamza ibn Said el-Harazi, evidently a Mussulman.

This is followed by the dates of births, and extended astronomical tables by a later hand, which ends with the following note: מצאתי כתוב מכריבת יד החזקה יחיא ג' יעיש: אלהמרי נעג זה הסוד נואלו שרי צען אל תקרי צוען אלא צנעא נירוסף ה' פי' שימלכו בה מלכים חזקים זה אחר זה ובה' קץ הגאולה בימיו יתגלה המשיח וזה לך סוד גדול אל תגליהו "ע"כ מצארי. Says Yahya ibn Yaish el-Hamri. This is the mystery in Isaiah xix. 13, Read Zan'a instead of Zoan, which will perish, that means that strong kings will govern one after another, and the time of the eighth is the time of the redemption, when the Messiah will reveal himself." (8.) Next comes a mathematical treatise in Arabic, divided into fifteen chapters, with following superscription: כראב מעאריף אלפכר אלוהיג פי חל משכלאת אלזיג ממה ענא בתאליפה אלמאם אלעאלם אלפאצל אלכאמל אוחד אלזמאן

מחמד אבן אבי בכר אלפארסי, by Mohammed ibn Abi Bekr el-Farisi, again a Mohammedan author.

On the margin is to be found by a later hand an historical treatise concerning Yemen in Arabic, written partly with Hebrew and partly with Arabic characters. The last three pages contain (1) note on the Al-Magest, attributed to Ptolemy, by Tabit ben Qorrah, with the title כתאב תסהיל אלמניסמי; (2) a treatise on geometry, which begins as follows: קאל אלשיך אלרייס אלמגל אחמד בן מחמד בן אברהם: אלמשערי סאלני בעץ אלמכואן אן אגמע לך מכתצרא פי אשכאל אלממסוהאת, by Ahmed ben Mohammed ben Abraham el-Ash'ari, also a Mohammedan writer.

We can see from this brief sketch that the Yemen Jews, in spite of their small numbers and long-continued troubles, were productive in literary works, and displayed more taste than the Polish-Ashkenazic Rabbis.

A. NEUBAUER.

APPENDIX TO PAGE 608.

The late J. Sappir draws the following conclusions:—He says that the date of this epitaph is really 20, of the Seleucidæan era, which began about the time of Simon the Just, for the thousands, according to him, are never left out. Consequently the Jewish settlement at Aden must have taken place after the destruction of the first Temple. The next deduction is that square characters, in which these epitaphs are written, must have been the old writing of the Hebrews, and not those brought from Syria and introduced by Ezra.¹ Of course the last conclusion is completely erroneous, for we know from the Siloam inscription what form of writing was in use with the Jews during the first Temple. These epitaphs contain not only formulæ which presuppose the belief in the immortality of the soul, and words which point to a late date, *e.g.*, צנועה, ירא שמים; but also abbreviations, like רוחו נן ערין, נע"ג (רוח י"י תניתנו) רי"ת, which, if strange enough in inscriptions of the eighth century (we do not find them in the epitaphs of the same date, or even a little later in Italy),² are

¹ See *Studia Biblica*, iii., p. 13.

² See above p. 608.

inadmissible so early as 300 B.C. The Arabic names for women, such as חמאמא for יונה "Dove," לולו for פנינה Pearl, חסינה for חנה are also curious. The names of the months are the same as those of which the Talmud says that the Jews brought them from Babylonia ; the month of Iyyar has in these epitaphs the Arabic form אייר. Considering all these strange words and formulæ, we feel obliged to reject Sappir's opinion as to the date of the epitaphs of Aden, and to side with the almost unanimous opinion that they are of the eighth century A.D.
